

From Chains to Debt: Slavery, Colonial Lies, and the Persistence of Neo-Colonial Dependency

Olusegun A. Obasun

Department of Consultant, Segunobasun Consult, Nigeria

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.909000196>

Received: 02 September 2025; Accepted: 10 September 2025; Published: 04 October 2025

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the continuity of exploitation from transatlantic slavery through European colonization to contemporary neo-colonial dependency, arguing that these are not discrete historical episodes but interconnected stages of a global capitalist order. While slavery commodified African bodies and colonization expropriated land and resources, neocolonialism reproduces dependency through debt, structural adjustment, and epistemological distortions. It highlights how cultural and epistemological lies—ranging from racial ideologies and religious iconography to cartographic distortions and demographic engineering—naturalized European domination and legitimized extractive systems. The essay illustrates how colonial inventions, such as artificial borders, population myths, and resource-dependent economies, continue to influence postcolonial governance, identity, and development trajectories. The study contributes to decolonial scholarship by exposing the persistence of colonial knowledge systems in sustaining structural dependency, and calls for epistemic decolonization, cultural reclamation, and economic restructuring as pathways toward equitable global relations.

Keywords: Cartographic justice, Postcolonial dependency, Neo-colonialism, Epistemic decolonization, Cultural imperialism, Debt Dependency, Cartographic Violence, Economics of Liberation

INTRODUCTION

The global economic order did not emerge solely from innovation and voluntary exchange, but was constructed upon centuries of systemic exploitation, dispossession, and ideological manipulation. From the violent commodification of African bodies in the transatlantic slave trade, through the territorial plunder and cultural erasures of European colonization, to the subtler financial, political, and cultural mechanisms of neo-colonialism, the underlying logic has remained constant: extract labor and resources from the periphery to sustain accumulation in the core (Rodney, 1972; Williams, 1944). What appears as historical progression is, in reality, the reconfiguration of coercion under new guises.

Slavery was the foundational stage of this system. More than twelve million Africans were uprooted, trafficked, and commodified, producing extraordinary profits that underwrote Europe's industrial revolution (Eltis & Richardson, 2010). This was not only economic theft but also a project of epistemic violence: the erasure of African histories and sovereignties, the invention of "Blackness" as an inferior category (Fanon, 1967), and the deployment of religious iconography, such as the whitening of Jesus, to sanctify European supremacy (Mignolo, 1995). Colonization institutionalized these logics, transforming human commodification into territorial control, resource extraction, and demographic manipulation. Through the Berlin Conference and other imperial blueprints, borders were arbitrarily imposed, census data distorted, and cultural narratives rewritten to fabricate legitimacy for foreign rule (Mamdani, 1996; Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999).

Nigeria exemplifies the enduring consequences of these colonial fabrications. Amalgamated without regard for ethnic, cultural, or political coherence, the Nigerian state was designed to serve metropolitan interests rather than indigenous autonomy. The result has been persistent ethno-regional conflict, governance crises, and economic dependency. Nigeria remains, in this sense, a "living archive" of colonial lies—its politics shaped by demographic myths, its economy tied to extractive infrastructures, and its cultural self-perceptions mediated by external epistemologies (Falola, 2009).

With the wave of independence in the mid-20th century, direct colonial control waned, but the architecture of dependency persisted. Colonial powers, through institutions like the IMF and World Bank, re-inscribed subordination using loans, conditionalities, and structural adjustment. Debt thus became the modern equivalent of tribute: extracting value while preserving the appearance of sovereignty. As Kwame Nkrumah (1965) argued, neo-colonialism preserved economic and political domination through debt regimes, structural adjustment programs, multinational corporations, and externally imposed cultural norms. Slave ships gave way to spreadsheets, missionary schools to global media, and territorial rule to multilateral institutions like the IMF and World Bank (Stiglitz, 2002). Globalization, often celebrated as an epoch of freedom and interdependence, thus represents not a rupture with empire but its most technologically advanced form (Arrighi, 2007; Mishra, 2012).

A critical but often overlooked continuity lies in patterns of migration. While contemporary migrants are not enslaved chattel, the structural dynamics echo earlier forced mobilities. Just as slavery siphoned labor from Africa to fuel European development, today's "brain drain" drains skilled workers—teachers, doctors, engineers—from the Global South, where their education and training were financed at high fiscal and social cost, to the Global North, where they become engines of prosperity. The point is not equivalence, but continuity: both systems convert Southern human capital into Northern accumulation, entrenching underdevelopment at its origin and reinforcing dependency at its destination.

This essay, therefore, situates slavery, colonization, neo-colonialism, and migration as interconnected stages in the architecture of global capitalism. It advances three arguments. First, that slavery inaugurated a racialized system of accumulation by dispossession whose logics persist. Second, that colonization institutionalized underdevelopment through borders, resource extraction, and epistemological control. Third, that neo-colonialism reconfigures these logics into modern financial, political, cultural, and migratory systems of dependency. Using Nigeria as a case study while drawing insights from the wider Global South, the essay highlights how the material and epistemic lies of empire continue to structure global inequality. Ultimately, it argues for epistemic decolonization and structural transformation, since genuine development cannot be achieved by inclusion into a skewed system but only through reconstituting its very foundations.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a decolonial genealogical analysis, grounded in political economy and critical theory. This method traces the historical origins and evolutionary pathways of key concepts—race, borders, debt, and sovereignty—to reveal how they were constructed as instruments of power and domination (Foucault, 1977; Mignolo, 1995). The approach is qualitative and interpretive, synthesizing existing scholarship to expose the enduring continuities of exploitation across slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonial globalization. The analysis is guided by a three-tiered analytical framework:

Genealogical and Archival Analysis

The paper constructs its argument through a synthesis of key theoretical works from decolonial, postcolonial, and dependency schools of thought (e.g., Rodney, 1972; Nkrumah, 1965; Mignolo, 1995; Fanon, 1967). It traces the genealogy of extractive mechanisms—from forced labor and territorial conquest to modern debt regimes and offshoring—by critically integrating historical scholarship. This involves analyzing secondary sources, including archival data from projects like *Slave Voyages* (Eltis & Richardson, 2010) and critiques of colonial cartography (Harley, 1989), to reconstruct how cultural and epistemological lies (e.g., racial hierarchies, religious whitening, cartographic distortions) were created to normalize subjugation and justify economic dispossession. Nigeria's amalgamation in 1914 and the partitioning of Somali territories illustrate how arbitrary lines fostered instability (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Focused Case Study Analysis

Nigeria serves as the primary case study to ground the theoretical argument in empirical reality. The analysis examines how specific colonial inventions—such as its arbitrary borders, demographic manipulations, and extractive economic infrastructure—continue to define its postcolonial governance, identity, and development

trajectory. This relies on a review of histories of IMF and World Bank loan conditionalities, and political science analyses of prebendalism and ethno-regional conflict (e.g., Joseph, 1987; Suberu, 2001; Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999).

Contemporary Anchoring: Migration and Financial Dependency

To demonstrate the present-day manifestations of these historical structures, the study incorporates contemporary empirical evidence. This includes analysis of recent migration statistics (IOM, 2024; UN DESA, 2020), data on external debt servicing (World Bank, 2023), and reports on fiscal policy (Budget Office of the Federation, 2023) to illustrate the modern dynamics of financial dependency and human capital extraction.

By combining theoretical synthesis, focused case study examination, and contemporary data analysis, this methodology situates present-day inequalities within the *longue durée* of global capitalist dispossession. It highlights how both material exploitation and epistemic domination—whether through maps, myths, or migration—remain central to the reproduction of global dependency, arguing that understanding this nexus is essential for any meaningful project of decolonization. The author acknowledges the use of ChatGPT for drafting assistance and language refinement to enhance the clarity of the manuscript. The AI tool was employed solely for improving readability and structuring sentences, without influencing the analytical, interpretative, or conceptual contributions of the study. All substantive content, analyses, and conclusions were independently developed by the author.

FINDINGS

Slavery and the Genesis of Racial Capitalism

The transatlantic slave trade was not only one of the most significant economic enterprises in world history but also the foundational stage of racialized global capitalism. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, more than twelve million Africans were forcibly transported to the Americas, where their coerced labor sustained plantation economies producing cotton, sugar, and tobacco for European markets (Eltis & Richardson, 2010). These commodities fueled industrial growth, technological innovation, and capital accumulation in the Global North, thereby creating the material conditions that enabled the Industrial Revolution. Eric Williams (1944), in *Capitalism and Slavery*, famously argued that Britain's industrial rise was financed in no small part by profits derived from enslaved African labor.

The so-called “triangular trade” created an international division of labor: Africa supplied enslaved labor, the Americas produced raw commodities, and Europe reaped profits. This arrangement institutionalized unequal exchange and laid the structural foundations of global inequality. As W.E.B. Du Bois (1935) and Walter Rodney (1972) later argued, the damage to Africa extended beyond demographic devastation. Slavery disrupted state formation, institutional continuity, and human capital development, leaving a lasting legacy of underdevelopment that continues to resonate.

Yet slavery was never merely an economic system. It was simultaneously a cultural and ideological project that relied on epistemological lies. Europeans constructed racial hierarchies that positioned Africans as biologically inferior and morally unfit for freedom (Roberts & Parks, 2007). The invention of “Blackness” as a fixed and inferior category homogenized diverse peoples—Yoruba, Igbo, Wolof, Akan—into a faceless underclass. Enslavement was thus accompanied by the erasure of identity: the suppression of languages, religions, and kinship systems. This ideological violence legitimized not only the slave trade but the broader claim of European civilizational superiority.

Although formal slavery was abolished in the nineteenth century, its racial and structural logics persisted. As Du Bois (1935) observed, the formal abolition of slavery did not mark the end of exploitation, but rather its reconfiguration. The same racial hierarchies that had justified enslavement were redeployed to legitimize colonial conquest. Where chains once bound bodies, the colonial state now deployed borders, forced labor systems, and extractive taxation to maintain the same logic of dispossession. The mechanisms of domination

shifted—from chains to wages, from plantations to factories—but the imperative of control and extraction remained intact. In Foucaultian terms, the form of domination changed while the logic of discipline endured.

Global labor dynamics today echo historical patterns of colonial exploitation, revealing how the logics of extraction have been reconfigured rather than dismantled. Slavery and colonization once siphoned labor and resources from the periphery to sustain the core; contemporary globalization achieves a similar outcome by externalizing surplus labor from the Global South through precarious migration and flexible production systems. This is not an equivalence to slavery but a structural continuity of global inequality, where labor remains a central site of extraction. International migration provides a striking illustration. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) report that the number of people living outside their countries of birth rose from roughly 281 million in 2022—about 3.6% of the world's population—to an estimated 304 million in 2024, or 3.8% of the global population (IOM, 2024; UN DESA, 2020). This accelerating outflow of human capital from South to North underscores the persistence of dependency: remittances may ease balance-of-payments pressures, but the structural reality is one of continued extraction, as the South subsidizes the prosperity of the North by exporting its most skilled and mobile workers.

This structural outflow is a form of "brain drain," whereby fiscal investments in training and education are transferred from developing nations to developed economies. A clear example is the migration of Nigeria's health workforce, with over 5,000 doctors licensed in the UK between 2015 and 2022 (Nigerian Medical Association, 2023), representing a significant loss of human capital for Nigeria. Additionally, this extractive dynamic is reinforced by financial flows. Data from the World Bank and IMF show that Sub-Saharan Africa's debt servicing reached approximately \$74 billion in 2022, often surpassing the combined spending on health and education (World Bank, 2023). This financial burden further underscores how the Global South's resources continue to be extracted to benefit the Global North.

In sum, slavery established the genetic code of a capitalist world economy built on racialized extraction and epistemic violence. Its cultural, economic, and demographic logics were not eradicated with abolition but recalibrated across colonialism, neo-colonial finance, and globalization. To interrogate slavery, therefore, is not simply to recount a past injustice but to uncover the structural DNA of a world system that continues to drain value from the periphery to sustain accumulation at the core.

Cartographic, Cultural, and Demographic Lies: Manufacturing the Colonial Worldview

Colonial dominance was not sustained solely by brute force; it was upheld through control over perception, knowledge, and representation. European empires engineered an ideological infrastructure that normalized exploitation and embedded Eurocentric worldviews as objective truth. Cartography, racial classification, and religious iconography operated as "techniques of truth," disguising imperial violence as divine order and racial superiority.

Religious Iconography and Cultural Alienation

One of the most enduring ideological tools of colonization was the deliberate whitening of religious narratives, particularly Christianity. While Jesus Christ was historically a Middle Eastern Jew, European art, theology, and missionary curricula reimagined him as a blue-eyed, fair-skinned Caucasian. This transformation was not a benign artistic adaptation but a calculated racialization of divinity. By equating whiteness with the sacred and casting African features as markers of sin, primitivism, and spiritual darkness, colonizers embedded racial hierarchies within the very core of religious belief (Goldenberg, 2003; Jennings, 2010).

Missionaries played a central role in this ideological project. Far from being neutral spiritual emissaries, they functioned as cultural agents of empire. Through ecclesiastical art, church architecture, and missionary education, Africans were taught to equate salvation with assimilation into European values, language, and cultural practices. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) argues, colonial domination relied as much on the conquest of the mind as on the conquest of land. The result was profound psychological alienation: Africans were

encouraged to worship a deity fashioned in the image of their oppressors, internalizing spiritual inferiority while abandoning indigenous religious heritage.

This theological racialization was not incidental to empire but central to its justification. By framing European domination as God-ordained, the whitening of the divine legitimized the so-called “civilizing mission.” It presented conquest and subjugation not as acts of exploitation but as spiritual necessity, thereby reinforcing economic extraction and political control. In this way, religious iconography became a key mechanism through which epistemic violence was enacted, leaving a legacy of internalized racism, cultural dislocation, and structural inequality that persists into the present.

These dynamics did not end with the formal collapse of colonial rule. In the neo-colonial era, cultural and religious power continues to reinforce the same hierarchies under new guises. Global media industries, international religious networks, and Western-controlled publishing and education systems perpetuate Eurocentric imagery and narratives. Popular films, music, and television often reproduce colonial tropes that idealize whiteness while marginalizing African worldviews. Similarly, transnational religious organizations frequently export doctrines and leadership structures that privilege Western theology over indigenous spiritual traditions. Such mechanisms function as a continuation of colonial epistemology, embedding psychological dependency and legitimizing ongoing economic asymmetry.

Thus, the whitening of the divine and its neo-colonial reproductions reveal how cultural power remains a decisive arena of control. By shaping collective consciousness and identity, these strategies ensure the persistence of structural domination even in an era formally defined by sovereignty and independence.

The Colonial Construction of “Blackness” as a Tool of Dehumanization

The category of “Black” as a racial identity was not an African self-definition but a colonial invention. European colonizers deliberately collapsed the vast ethnic, cultural, and civilizational diversity of Africa—Yoruba, Igbo, Mandinka, Wolof, and many more—into a single, pejorative label. This abstraction served a clear purpose: to dehumanize, homogenize, and render Africans as inferior, interchangeable, and disposable within the emerging global order of slavery and imperialism (Fredrickson, 2002; Mamdani, 1996).

In this colonial racial schema, “Whiteness” was elevated as a symbol of purity, civility, and divine order, while “Blackness” was constructed as its opposite—signifying savagery, degeneracy, and incapacity. This binary was further reinforced by “scientific racism” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when figures such as Arthur de Gobineau and Robert Knox propagated pseudo-biological theories of African inferiority (Gould, 1981). These claims, presented as immutable truths, legitimized slavery, colonization, and exclusionary statecraft while embedding racial hierarchies deep within global consciousness. The residues of this epistemological violence endure. Across global media, educational narratives, and policing structures, Blackness remains a signifier of criminality, poverty, and otherness. It is crucial to acknowledge that ‘Black’ has been powerfully reclaimed as a badge of resistance, solidarity, and cultural pride in movements against racism and in support of Pan-African unity. This reclamation represents a significant act of agency in the face of oppression. However, the term’s colonial genealogy cannot be ignored. To embrace the label without critically interrogating its origins risks perpetuating the very epistemic framework it was designed to uphold.

True liberation requires moving beyond colonial racial abstractions toward the restoration of precolonial identities and histories that affirm African humanity and achievement. Africans were not born as “Black”; they were rulers, scholars, engineers, and spiritual leaders who built empires and civilizations such as Nubia, Axum, Mali, Songhai, and Carthage. Their contributions are not “Black history” but integral to world history. Thus, pride should not be grounded in a name forged in oppression but in the reclamation of Africa’s civilizational legacy and human dignity. Until global discourse moves beyond the colonial lens of color, the label “Black” remains less a marker of solidarity than a scar of misnaming—an enduring testament to the cultural and epistemological lies that sustained slavery and continue under neocolonialism.

Cartographic Fictions and Colonial Visual Hegemony

Maps are often mistaken for neutral, scientific representations of reality, but they are in fact cultural artifacts shaped by ideology, power, and historical context. The most enduring example is the Mercator projection, developed in 1569 by Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator. Originally designed for navigation—its preservation of angles aiding maritime travel—it became the global standard in education, business, diplomacy, and later digital platforms such as Google Maps. Its persistence illustrates how colonial epistemologies continue to structure modern geographic consciousness. The distortions embedded in the Mercator projection are profound. Landmasses closer to the poles are disproportionately enlarged, while equatorial regions are diminished. Europe and North America thus appear inflated, while Africa, Latin America, and South Asia are visually minimized. Africa, which covers over 30 million square kilometers, is often depicted as comparable in size to Greenland, which is only 2.1 million square kilometers. These distortions normalize a spatial hierarchy that elevates the Global North while diminishing the Global South (Monmonier, 1991; Harley, 1989).

This was not a trivial cartographic miscalculation but a technology of empire. During the transatlantic slave trade, distorted maps projected Europe as the center of global commerce while rendering Africa peripheral, legitimizing its reduction to a reservoir of labor. In the colonial era, maps became indispensable instruments of conquest—facilitating the Berlin Conference (1884–85), partitioning Africa, and symbolically erasing its cultural and geographic complexity. By inflating Europe and shrinking Africa, cartography visually aligned with material exploitation: vast resources and millions of enslaved bodies were extracted from a continent represented as small, marginal, and disposable. As Harley (1989) noted, “maps are a form of knowledge and a form of power.” The Mercator projection exemplified this double function: visually affirming Europe’s civilizing mission while masking the brutality of conquest. These cartographic fictions complemented other epistemological lies—racial typologies, manipulated demographic statistics, and the whitening of Christian iconography—to construct a worldview in which Europe was central, destined to rule, and morally superior, while Africa was imagined as dependent, backward, and subordinate.

The consequences endure in the present. Generations have grown up with maps that visually minimize Africa, reinforcing myths of its marginality and shaping perceptions of its geopolitical irrelevance. In global politics, economics, and even humanitarian discourse, Africa remains framed as peripheral, despite its demographic centrality and substantial resource wealth. In this sense, colonial cartography is not merely historical—it remains an active support of neocolonial marginalization, aligning with contemporary discourses of aid, trade, and security that position the continent as dependent rather than sovereign.

The European Colonial Legacy of Arbitrary Borders and Global Fragmentation

One of the most enduring legacies of European imperialism lies in the violence of borders. Far from being neutral administrative devices, borders were political technologies of domination that manufactured states, fractured societies, and embedded instability into the global South. Presented as rational, scientific, or civilizing, they were in fact epistemological lies that masked the brutality of conquest behind the veneer of modernity. The Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 epitomized the cartographic violence of colonialism. Convened without a single African representative, seven European powers—Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, and Italy—partitioned the continent with pens and rulers, driven less by geographic knowledge than by imperial ambition. The outcomes were not merely territorial but profoundly structural, embedding fragmentation and fragility into African polities (Herbst, 2014). As British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury later conceded:

“We [the British and the French] have been engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no white man’s foot ever trod: we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by the small impediments that we never knew exactly where the mountains and rivers and lakes were” (quoted in Gashaw, 2017).

The consequences were both catastrophic and enduring. Cohesive communities were carved apart: the Somalis were split among five different jurisdictions—British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, French Somaliland (now Djibouti), Ethiopia’s Ogaden region, and British East Africa (now part of Kenya); the Tuareg were dispersed

across the French colonies of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Algeria, as well as Italian-controlled Libya; and the Yoruba were divided between British Nigeria and French Dahomey (now Republic of Benin). Conversely, disparate groups with little shared political history were forced together in artificial constructs such as Nigeria, amalgamated in 1914 into a single state containing more than 250 ethnic groups. Unlike European nation-states, which evolved gradually, Nigeria's unity was imposed by fiat, sowing the seeds of ethno-regional rivalry, civil war, and political fragility (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

This strategy of bordered fragmentation was not confined to Africa. Similar cartographic manipulations unfolded in the Middle East, where Britain's duplicity in its wartime promises led to overlapping sovereignties and enduring conflicts. In the Middle East, Britain perfected the art of duplicity during World War I by making contradictory territorial promises that reshaped the region's political geography. Three commitments illustrate this deception:

- **The McMahon–Hussein Correspondence (1915–1916):** Britain promised Arab independence in return for support against the Ottomans (Dawnay, 2013).
- **The Sykes–Picot Agreement (1916):** In a secret pact with France, Britain simultaneously carved Ottoman territories into spheres of influence (Fromkin, 1989).
- **The Balfour Declaration (1917):** Britain pledged support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, disregarding Arab aspirations and earlier commitments (Khalidi, 2006).

These overlapping promises were not diplomatic blunders but deliberate maneuvers. They embedded structural contradictions that guaranteed instability, particularly in Palestine, where layered sovereignties and competing claims produced displacement, statelessness, and cycles of conflict (Khalidi, 2006).

The same colonial logic of arbitrary boundary-making scarred South Asia and continues to reverberate. The partition of British India (1947) created the unresolved dispute over Jammu and Kashmir, fueling wars and cycles of tension between India and Pakistan (Bose, 2003). Likewise, the McMahon Line, a border unilaterally imposed by the British in the early 20th century, remains at the heart of the India–China border conflict. Since the 1950s, India has consistently insisted on recognizing this colonial boundary, whereas China has rejected it (Maxwell, 2013). This dispute has hindered broader bilateral cooperation and periodically led to military standoffs. Unlike with its other neighbors—Russia, Mongolia, Vietnam, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Myanmar—China has successfully resolved all land border disputes. The unresolved cases involving India and Bhutan (the latter heavily influenced by India's foreign policy) highlight how colonial borders continue to shape geopolitics in Asia (Malik, 2021).

Other regions have inherited similar dilemmas. In Cyprus, British colonial manipulation and partitioning in the mid-20th century entrenched Greek–Turkish rivalries, leading to a division that persists to this day (Ker-Lindsay, 2011). In Sudan and South Sudan, colonial-era amalgamations of disparate peoples under one administration contributed to the eventual secession of the South in 2011, but not without decades of civil war and ongoing border disputes (Johnson, 2016). From Nigeria's contested censuses and prebendal politics to the unresolved crises of Palestine, Kashmir, and Cyprus, many of today's most protracted conflicts can be traced to these colonial cartographies of convenience. Borders, like racial hierarchies and religious distortions, became instruments of epistemological violence: lies dressed up as science, diplomacy, or progress, yet serving the same function as slavery—extracting resources and securing imperial control.

These arbitrary borders did not simply create ethnic tensions; they also produced fragile states dependent on external mediation and financing. By weakening internal sovereignty, colonial cartography paved the way for the financial dependency structures that would later emerge under neo-colonial debt regimes. Thus, the colonial manipulation of borders exemplifies the continuum of dispossession linking chains to debt. Just as enslaved Africans were commodified and Africa visually diminished on maps, the arbitrary partitioning of space created states that were structurally fragile, politically dependent, and perpetually vulnerable to neocolonial influence. The violent geometries of empire remain etched onto today's world map, ensuring that sovereignty in much of the global South is still circumscribed by lines drawn in European capitals over a century ago.

Nigeria: A Living Archive of Colonial Lies

Nigeria epitomizes how the logics of slavery—extraction, domination, and dehumanization—were reconfigured through colonialism and persist in the neocolonial present. The state itself was a colonial invention: in 1914, the British amalgamated more than 250 diverse ethnic groups into a single polity for administrative convenience and imperial profit (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Unlike European nation-states that consolidated organically, Nigeria’s forced unity embedded fractures that culminated in the Biafran War and continue to destabilize its fragile politics.

Colonial authorities entrenched inequality through epistemological distortions masquerading as neutral administration. Census figures, for instance, were deployed as political instruments rather than objective records. The British institutionalized the myth of northern demographic supremacy, claiming that sparsely populated Northern Nigeria was larger than the urbanized, economically dynamic South, thereby allocating disproportionate political representation to northern elites (Osaghae, 1998; Dunmoye, 2002). This fabrication, sustained through successive censuses, continues to shape electoral outcomes, resource allocation, and federal arrangements. Such tools of “soft power”—maps, censuses, and registers—functioned as weapons of domination, embedding inequality into the very architecture of governance.

Economically, Nigeria inherited an extractive structure oriented to the export of raw commodities—groundnuts in the North, cocoa in the Southwest, and most decisively, oil from the Niger Delta. Oil rents accounted for more than 50% of government revenues in 2020 (World Bank, 2020), yet over 40% of Nigerians live below the poverty line (NBS, 2022). Like slavery’s commodification of African bodies, Nigeria’s oil wealth enriches distant powers and multinational corporations while impoverishing local communities and devastating ecosystems. Structural Adjustment Programs of the 1980s and 1990s, tied to \$3.5 billion in IMF and World Bank loans, compounded these vulnerabilities by imposing devaluation, liberalization, and austerity, hollowing out public services and deepening poverty (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999). By the first quarter of 2023, debt servicing consumed over 96% of Nigeria’s federal revenue (Budget Office of the Federation, 2023).

Politically, these colonial inheritances persist under new guises. The myth of northern demographic supremacy sustains prebendal politics and skewed federal arrangements (Suberu, 2001). Arbitrary borders and ethnic fragmentation, exploited by elites, have ensured that the state functions more as a rentier apparatus than a democratic institution (Joseph, 1987). Elections occur regularly but are often hollow rituals marred by fraud, patronage, and suppression of dissent. Far from dismantling colonial distortions, postcolonial elites have recycled them under the veneer of neoliberal reform.

Nigeria is thus more than a postcolonial state—it is a living archive of colonial lies: the lie of demographic supremacy, the lie of prosperity through resource abundance, the lie of national unity, and the lie of sovereignty itself. These inherited fictions, cloaked in the language of modern governance and neoliberal orthodoxy, ensure that fragility and dependency persist beneath the veneer of independence. Nigeria’s enduring crises—ethno-regional conflict, underdevelopment, fiscal fragility, and democratic dysfunction—must therefore be understood not as isolated failures, but as symptoms of a deeper continuum: the transformation of chains into debt.

Continuum of Extraction

The mechanisms of global exploitation have shifted from slavery’s forced labor to colonization’s territorial extraction, and now to neocolonialism’s financial dependency and globalization’s offshoring. A conceptual table illustrates this continuum:

Historical Phase	Dominant Mechanism of Extraction	Instruments of Control	Form of Value Transfer
Slavery (16th–19thC)	Forced labour and commodification	Slave ships, race ideology, plantation system	Labour exported to colonies; capital to Europe

Colonization (19th–mid 20thC)	Resource extraction through territorial control	Borders, railways, taxation, missionary schools	Raw materials, taxation revenues
Neo-Colonialism (mid 20thC–present)	Economic-financial subordination	IMF, World Bank, WTO, multinational corporations	Debt service, profit repatriation
Globalization (20thC–present)	Disembedded labour & flexible production	GVCs, FDI, technology platforms	Surplus labour value externalized to periphery

DISCUSSION

The Interlocking Machinery of Dependency

The trajectory from slavery through colonialism to neocolonialism reflects not rupture but transformation in the modalities of domination. What began as the violent commodification of African bodies evolved into territorial conquest and now persists in financial dependency, cultural prescription, and epistemological subordination. At every stage, imperial control has relied not only on force but also on lies—racial hierarchies, cartographic distortions, demographic fabrications, and religious universalism—that legitimated exploitation while obscuring its violence.

These lies were never discrete. They reinforced one another in a self-reinforcing system of justification. Cartography visually diminished Africa, preparing the continent for partition and demographic manipulation. Within those artificial borders, colonial censuses institutionalized myths such as Northern Nigeria’s supposed majority, legitimizing uneven power distribution. Religion sanctified race by whitening divinity, embedding a moral hierarchy that naturalized conquest and slavery. Together, these lies created an ideological edifice that turned violence into a “civilizing mission” and domination into “order.”

Nigeria epitomizes this interlocking system. Its borders are cartographic fictions, its federal structure built upon demographic myth, its religious and cultural hierarchies shaped by colonial alienation. These inherited distortions continue to structure its crises: prebendal politics rooted in census manipulation, an extractive oil economy dependent on foreign capital, and debt regimes administered by the IMF and World Bank. Nigeria is thus not simply postcolonial; it is a living archive of colonial lies—demographic, cartographic, economic, and epistemological—ensuring fragility under the guise of sovereignty.

The broader pattern is one of “independence without sovereignty.” Formal decolonization replaced colonial officers with debt regimes, trade liberalization, and austerity (Rodney, 1972; Stiglitz, 2002). Neocolonial finance perpetuates global asymmetries through debt servicing, profit repatriation, and structural adjustment, while Western epistemologies continue to dominate curricula, philanthropy, and media, rendering Southern knowledge secondary (Fanon, 1952). Migration compounds these dynamics. Just as the slave trade commodified African bodies for European accumulation, today’s brain drain externalizes human capital, enriching Northern economies while perpetuating Southern dependency—a “neo-Middle Passage” of talent loss.

Even tools of representation remain implicated. The Mercator projection, which distorts the size of Europe and underrepresents Africa, exemplifies how maps construct hierarchies as much as they depict geography (Harley, 1989; Wood, 1992). The persistence of such visual distortions underscores the epistemic dimension of dependency. True sovereignty, therefore, requires more than economic restructuring; it demands epistemic justice—redrawing maps, rewriting curricula, and reclaiming suppressed cultural narratives.

In this light, slavery’s afterlife resides as much in consciousness as in material chains. Economic reforms without epistemic renewal leave dependencies intact, merely recast as debt, conditionalities, or modernization dictates. Genuine liberation requires dismantling the racial, religious, cartographic, and demographic lies that underpinned empire while reconstructing governance, knowledge, and identity on autonomous foundations. The Nigerian case illustrates this inseparability: economic and epistemic emancipation must advance together if the infrastructures of neocolonial domination are to be dismantled.

Global Repercussions and the Crisis of Hegemony

The unresolved crises of Palestine, Kashmir, and Cyprus, along with the Line of Actual Control (LAC)—the primary disputed border area between China and India—demonstrate how colonial-era cartographies and diplomatic duplicities still shape geopolitical fault lines. Only by unmasking and replacing these lies with pluralist, self-defined truths can the Global South move from formal independence to substantive sovereignty. The rise of BRICS, the appeal of sovereignty-first development models, and growing solidarities within the Global South reflect a search for alternatives to neocolonial dependency. The erosion of U.S. hegemony and the shift toward multipolarity underscore that the cultural and economic of empire are no longer uncontested.

Neo-Colonial Dependency: The Shift from Chains to Debt

In the contemporary global order, debt has supplanted chains as the dominant instrument of subjugation. Where slavery extracted labor and colonialism extracted land and resources, debt now extracts fiscal sovereignty. Loans, tied to conditionalities imposed by international financial institutions, narrow policy autonomy and enforce austerity, ensuring that states remain dependent on external approval for their economic decisions. The language of “aid” and “assistance” masks these asymmetries, recasting exploitation as benevolence while maintaining the core-periphery divide. The endurance of dependency is not abstract but manifests vividly in present-day case studies. Nigeria’s spiraling debt, the CFA franc’s stranglehold on African monetary sovereignty, Indonesia’s Cold War oil dependency, and the emergence of BRICS as resistance all demonstrate how the colonial logic of control has been transposed into modern financial and geopolitical arrangements.

Nigeria’s Debt Servicing Burden

Nigeria provides a stark illustration of how neo-colonial debt functions as a modern form of tribute. Recent IMF and World Bank data (2024–2025) reveal that the country spends more on servicing external debt than on health or education combined, underscoring how scarce public resources are redirected outward to creditors rather than inward to human development (World Bank, 2025; IMF, 2025). In Q1 2024 alone, 74% of federal retained revenue—~~₦~~1.31 trillion out of ~~₦~~1.76 trillion—was allocated to debt servicing, leaving paltry funds for development (Nairametrics, 2024). Over the 2023 fiscal year, 64.5% of government revenue was allocated to debt servicing, with spending rising to ~~₦~~7.66 trillion (BusinessDay, 2024). Between January and September 2024, debt servicing accounted for 47% of total expenditure and a staggering 147% of retained revenue, effectively exceeding Nigeria’s fiscal capacity (CBN, 2024). Projections for 2025 are grimmer still: the African Development Bank cautions that up to 75% of federal revenue may soon be absorbed by interest payments, thereby crowding out essential investments in health, education, and infrastructure (AfDB, 2025). This fiscal straitjacket reproduces the very cycles of poverty and underdevelopment it purports to alleviate, locking Nigeria—and much of the Global South—into a state of permanent dependency.

Proponents of the current global financial architecture often defend mechanisms such as structural adjustment and debt financing as necessary, albeit painful, measures for achieving macroeconomic stability and growth. From this perspective, conditionalities attached to loans are seen as promoting good governance, fiscal discipline, and market efficiency—prerequisites for attracting foreign investment and achieving long-term development (see, e.g., Krueger, 1998; World Bank, 1990). Similarly, contemporary migration is frequently framed within a neoliberal narrative of ‘brain gain’ and ‘free movement of labor,’ where remittances are highlighted as a key benefit to countries of origin.

However, the evidence presented in this analysis fundamentally challenges this optimistic framing. The Nigerian case demonstrates that structural adjustment programmes, rather than fostering sustainable growth, hollowed out the state’s capacity to provide public goods, deindustrialized the economy, and deepened poverty, thereby exacerbating the very vulnerabilities they were purported to fix (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999). The fiscal discipline enforced by debt servicing, as data shows, prioritizes creditor repayment over domestic investment in health and education, creating a vicious cycle of underdevelopment. Furthermore, the ‘brain drain’ of skilled professionals represents a direct subsidy from the Global South to the North, where the benefits of remittances often pale in comparison to the lost social and fiscal investment in human capital. Thus, what is presented as neutral economic theory or mutual benefit often functions in practice as a sophisticated mechanism for perpetuating dependency and extracting value.

Monetary Dependency and the CFA Franc

Monetary systems remain one of the clearest sites of neo-colonial control, and the CFA franc stands as perhaps the most enduring symbol of this dependency. Created in 1945 under French colonial rule and still pegged to the euro, the CFA franc ties 14 West and Central African countries to a framework designed primarily to safeguard European stability rather than foster African development. As Sylla (2017) and Nubukpo (2019) demonstrate, the arrangement requires member states to deposit 50% of their foreign reserves with the French Treasury. This mechanism severely restricts monetary sovereignty, depriving governments of the capacity to direct reserves toward domestic investment, crisis management, or developmental innovation. In effect, African economies subsidize external stability while remaining disproportionately exposed to global shocks. Recent African Union and UNCTAD assessments (2023) further show that CFA-linked economies faced greater barriers to countercyclical spending during global crises than peers with autonomous currencies. Far from being a neutral or technical regime, the CFA franc represents the persistence of colonial monetary architecture in the present. It institutionalizes dependency, constraining fiscal futures and subordinating African development trajectories to European interests

Resource Extraction and the Cold War Order

The end of formal colonialism did not dismantle extractive logics; it reconfigured them within the geopolitical structures of the Cold War. Resource wealth in the Global South was subordinated not only to the interests of Western capital but also to the strategic imperatives of containment and alliance politics. Extraction thus became a dual instrument—feeding metropolitan economies while anchoring dependent regimes within the Western bloc.

Indonesia during the Cold War illustrates how resource wealth was subordinated to external control. By the 1960s, Western oil companies such as Caltex and Shell controlled over 80% of Indonesia's oil output, while revenues disproportionately accrued abroad (Vickers, 2013). The 1965 military coup, backed by Western powers, facilitated the opening of Indonesia's economy to foreign investors, institutionalized through IMF-supported reforms in the late 1960s. As UNCTAD (2023) notes, this created a pattern of enclave extraction—resource exports without domestic industrial upgrading—that persists in Indonesia's coal and palm oil sectors today.

A parallel can be drawn with **Africa's Cold War resource economies**. In Congo, the uranium mined at Shinkolobwe was critical to the U.S. atomic program, yet the Congolese people derived little benefit from this strategic resource (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Similarly, Angola's oil, heavily exploited by U.S. and European multinationals, became central to Cold War alignments while fueling decades of conflict. These cases reveal how Cold War geopolitics intersected with neo-colonial extraction: resource wealth became a liability rather than a source of liberation, ensuring that postcolonial states remained structurally tied to external powers even as they formally claimed independence.

In **Latin America**, Cold War resource politics were equally decisive. Chile's copper industry, the world's largest, was long dominated by U.S. firms such as Anaconda and Kennecott. When President Salvador Allende nationalized copper in 1971, U.S. opposition was swift, with Washington orchestrating sanctions and covert operations that destabilized his government, culminating in the 1973 coup (Kornbluh, 2003). Similarly, Venezuela's oil—vital to U.S. energy security—was tightly integrated into U.S.-controlled corporate and financial networks throughout the Cold War. Attempts at asserting sovereignty over these resources were met with pressure, intervention, or co-optation, keeping Latin America within Washington's strategic and economic orbit (Monaldi, 2005).

Together, these cases from *Asia, Africa, and Latin America* demonstrate that Cold War extraction was not simply about economics but about power. Resource wealth was strategically embedded in global structures of dependency, ensuring that the Global South remained a supplier of raw materials for the North's industrial and military might. Far from liberating postcolonial states, resource abundance entrenched their vulnerability, fusing neo-colonial economics with Cold War geopolitics in ways that still reverberate today.

Emerging Alternatives and South–South Resistance

Despite the persistence of neo-colonial dependency through debt regimes, resource extraction, and monetary subordination, the Global South has not remained passive. Across Africa, Latin America, and Asia, new experiments in financial and political cooperation have emerged to contest the structural hierarchies embedded in the Bretton Woods order. These initiatives—though uneven, fragile, and often constrained by external pressures—signal an alternative horizon of South–South solidarity and pluriversal development.

Mini-Case 1: BRICS Resistance

The expansion of BRICS into BRICS+—with new members including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE—marks an effort to diversify financing options and reduce reliance on Western-dominated credit markets. By 2025, the combined GDP of BRICS+ had surpassed that of the G7 in purchasing power parity terms, signaling its growing structural weight in the global economy (Stuenkel, 2020; UNCTAD, 2025).

Central to this strategy is the New Development Bank (NDB), which by 2024 had financed more than \$30 billion in infrastructure and development projects without imposing the austerity-driven conditionalities characteristic of IMF and World Bank lending. Experiments with local currency trade and cross-regional investment flows underscore the bloc’s ambition to institutionalize financial sovereignty and lay the foundations of a multipolar financial order.

As Stuenkel (2020) emphasizes, BRICS is more than an economic arrangement—it is a political statement of resistance to the hierarchies embedded in Western-led globalization. Though uneven and contested, BRICS represents an embryonic counterweight to the Bretton Woods system, signaling a slow but significant reconfiguration of global financial governance.

Mini-Case 2: ALBA and Latin American Autonomy

In Latin America, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) aimed to incorporate principles of solidarity and social justice into regional integration. Initiatives such as the *Sucre* virtual currency and cooperative energy agreements were designed to reduce reliance on the IMF and World Bank, as well as U.S. dollar dominance. Muhr (2016) notes that ALBA’s focus on healthcare, education, and welfare programs represented a conscious rejection of neoliberal orthodoxy, replacing market-driven integration with people-centered cooperation. While its momentum has been weakened by political transitions and external economic pressures, ALBA remains a powerful example of how regional autonomy can be built around social priorities rather than structural adjustment.

Mini-Case 3: The Pan-African Push for the African Monetary Fund

Africa has also begun to articulate alternative financial institutions aimed at reclaiming sovereignty from Bretton Woods dependency. The proposed African Monetary Fund (AMF), envisioned under the Abuja Treaty and reinforced by the African Union’s Agenda 2063, aims to provide stabilization financing, pool reserves, and reduce reliance on the IMF during balance-of-payments crises. If realized, the AMF could insulate African economies from speculative shocks while empowering states to pursue industrial policy, food sovereignty, and regional integration under the AfCFTA framework (Adesina, 2021). Though still in its early stages and hindered by funding and political will, the AMF symbolizes Africa’s determination to construct indigenous financial architectures capable of supporting autonomous development.

Together, BRICS+, ALBA, and the Pan-African AMF reveal a shared logic: the recognition that dependency is not immutable but the outcome of structural design. By building alternative institutions rooted in South–South solidarity, these initiatives challenge the inevitability of neo-colonial financial governance and open up the possibility of an Economics of Liberation—one in which sovereignty is not merely symbolic but materially anchored in financial, industrial, and epistemic autonomy.

Policy Recommendations

The Nigerian experience underscores how slavery's logic of dehumanization and colonialism's architecture of control remain embedded within contemporary governance, economy, and culture. These challenges are not isolated domestic dysfunctions, but rather structural continuities that bind Nigeria—and much of the Global South—to a world system designed to perpetuate dependency.

Breaking from this cycle requires more than technocratic reform; it demands a multidimensional strategy that is simultaneously economic, epistemic, institutional, and cultural. The following recommendations outline specific, actionable pathways toward reclaiming sovereignty and dismantling the infrastructures of neocolonial domination.

Epistemic Sovereignty: Reclaiming the Power to Know

Decolonization must begin with reclaiming the power to define history, knowledge, and identity.

Implement Mandatory Curricular Reform: Revise national educational curricula from primary to tertiary levels to center African perspectives. This must include:

- a. **Pre-Colonial Histories:** Integrating the study of advanced African civilizations and empires (e.g., Mali, Songhai, Great Zimbabwe, the Benin Kingdom) as standard subject matter, not optional modules.
- b. **Critical Cartography:** Adopting the Equal Earth Projection or Gall-Peters Projection in all school atlases and public maps to accurately represent the size of the Global South and visually challenge the marginality imposed by the Mercator map.
- c. **Philosophy and Knowledge Systems:** Teaching African philosophical traditions (e.g., Ubuntu, Yoruba cosmology) alongside the Western canon, affirming their value and relevance to modern ethical and governance challenges.

Democratize Knowledge Production

Establish state-funded research grants specifically for projects focused on indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, and community-led archaeology, reducing intellectual dependency on Western philanthropic agendas and academic trends.

Economic Reorientation: From Extraction to Value Creation

Material sovereignty requires a deliberate and strategic dismantling of the extractive economic model.

- **Accelerate the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA):** Move beyond ratification to active implementation by:
 - **Harmonizing Standards:** Establishing pan-African regulatory standards for key industries (e.g., agriculture, manufacturing) to facilitate trade.
 - **Investing in Infrastructure:** Prioritizing public investment in cross-border transportation (e.g., the Lagos-Abidjan corridor) and digital payment systems (e.g., the **Pan-African Payment and Settlement System - PAPSS**) to reduce transaction costs and dependency on external financial networks.
- **Enact Model Legislation on Profit Repatriation:** Draft and pass national laws to regulate multinational corporations (MNCs), including:
 - **Capped Repatriation:** Limiting the percentage of annual profits that can be transferred out of the country, ensuring a significant portion is reinvested locally.

- **Local Content Mandates:** Requiring MNCs to source a rising percentage of goods and services from local suppliers and to implement verifiable skills-transfer programs for national staff.
- **Institute a Transparent Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF):** Learn from successful models like Norway's Government Pension Fund Global. Legislation should mandate that a fixed, significant percentage of all resource rents (e.g., oil, gas, mineral revenues) be automatically channeled into a transparent, independently managed SWF. This fund must be constitutionally protected for long-term national development projects, macroeconomic stabilization, and the benefit of future generations, thereby insulating the economy from commodity price shocks and preventing elite capture.

Institutional Accountability: Dismantling Prebendal Politics

Institutions must be restructured to prioritize national sovereignty and social justice over elite patronage.

- **Resource Governance Transparency:** Legally mandate the public disclosure of all contracts with MNCs and the implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) standards. This allows civil society and citizens to track revenues and hold governments and corporations accountable.
- **Strategic Debt Renegotiation and Moratoriums:** Form a united front with other highly indebted nations in the Global South to collectively renegotiate the terms of sovereign debt with international creditors. This should involve:
 - Advocating for debt moratoriums or cancellations, particularly for loans taken by previous undemocratic regimes.
 - Rejecting loan conditionalities that constrain public spending on health, education, and industrial policy.

Cultural Reclamation: Asserting Sovereignty in Representation

Liberation must be as much cultural as it is economic to achieve full decolonization.

- **Reclaim Public Representation:** Launch public campaigns and fund national institutions to challenge colonial narratives and promote a more inclusive and equitable representation. This includes:
 - **Museum Restitution:** Intensifying diplomatic efforts for the permanent return of looted cultural artifacts held in Western museums.
 - **Media and Arts Funding:** Creating public grants for film, music, and literature that center on African narratives and historical figures, countering the dominance of foreign cultural imports.
- **Vernacularize Rights Frameworks:** Instead of outright rejecting international human rights norms or accepting them as imposed conditionality, lead a process of vernacularization. This means translating, adapting, and debating these frameworks within local cultural, religious, and philosophical contexts to build genuine, organic consensus, thus avoiding the charge of cultural imperialism.

In sum, true emancipation requires unmasking both the economic structures and the epistemological lies of neocolonialism. Nigeria's struggles are not unique, but they resonate with those of Latin American, Asian, and Middle Eastern countries. By reclaiming epistemic sovereignty, reorienting economic structures, enforcing institutional accountability, and pursuing cultural reclamation, the Global South can move from dependency to autonomy. Building solidarities across regions is essential to dismantling the shared colonial legacies that continue to define global order.

CONCLUSION

From Lies Of Empire To Emancipation Of Truth

Slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism are not discrete historical episodes but successive stages of a global system of domination built on accumulation by dispossession. What began as the violent commodification of African bodies evolved into territorial conquest, resource plunder, and, in the post-independence era, financial dependency and cultural subordination. The wealth of the Global North was constructed not only through coerced labor and stolen land but also through the systematic reorientation of colonial economies to serve metropolitan interests—an extractive pattern that continues in contemporary globalization.

Empire's endurance rests not merely on material violence but on ideological lies that normalize subjugation. The invention of "Blackness" as inferiority, the whitening of divinity in Christian iconography, the cartographic shrinking of Africa on the Mercator map, and the demographic fabrications that inflated Northern supremacy in Nigeria were not innocent distortions. They were deliberate epistemological weapons, crafted to make domination appear natural, inevitable, and even divinely ordained. Nigeria exemplifies this continuity: its fragile federation, prebendal politics, and oil dependency are living archives of colonial cartographies and fabricated censuses, now reinforced by debt regimes and neoliberal orthodoxy.

The wider Global South shares these burdens. The CFA franc continues to tie West and Central African states to French monetary control. Cold War concessions in Indonesia and Latin America subordinated resource wealth to Western capital. Contemporary debt regimes in countries like Zambia and Nigeria divert scarce revenues outward to creditors rather than inward to human development. These cases reveal how the transition from chains to debt reflects continuity rather than rupture: domination rebranded as neutrality, assistance, or modernization.

And yet, history is not without openings for emancipation. The growth of plurilateral initiatives—such as BRICS+, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), PAPSS, and efforts to establish an African Monetary Fund—signals an emerging solidarity across the Global South. These projects represent not only economic alternatives but epistemic acts of refusal: a rejection of the hierarchies embedded in Bretton Woods institutions and Western cartographies of power.

The historical arc from slavery to colonialism to debt demonstrates a persistent logic of domination, repackaged to fit changing global structures. By tracing these continuities, it becomes clear that neo-colonialism is not an aberration but the latest iteration of a long history of epistemological and economic subjugation. The task, therefore, is not merely reform within the existing system, but transformation of the structures that reproduce dependency. It requires epistemic decolonization—the dismantling of inherited lies and the reconstruction of knowledge systems that affirm indigenous dignity, agency, and histories. It requires economic restructuring—renegotiating exploitative trade regimes, regulating multinational capital, reclaiming resource rents for domestic transformation, and cancelling illegitimate debts. And it requires cultural renewal—revising curricula, producing just cartographies, and revitalizing indigenous intellectual traditions as sources of innovation and legitimacy.

Ultimately, decolonization is not a closed chapter but an unfinished imperative. To disentangle the colonial knot is to expose and discard the lies that underpinned slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism, while reconstructing a world where freedom is not partial but whole. Only then can the long arc from chains to debt give way to a future anchored in sovereignty, cooperation, and justice.

Future Research Agenda

Scholars must deepen their interdisciplinary analysis of how epistemological lies (such as maps, race, religion, and data) continue to shape global inequalities.

REFERENCES

1. Adesina, O. (2021). African Monetary Fund and the quest for financial sovereignty in Africa. *African Development Review*, 33(2), 215–228. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8268.12562>
2. African Development Bank (AfDB). (2022). African economic outlook 2022: Supporting climate resilience and a just energy transition in Africa. Abidjan: AfDB.

3. African Development Bank [AfDB]. (2025). African economic outlook 2025: Resilience and debt sustainability. Abidjan: AfDB.
4. Arrighi, G. (2007). Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the twenty-first century. Verso.
5. Bose, S. (2003). Kashmir: Roots of conflict, paths to peace. Harvard University Press.
6. Budget Office of the Federation. (2023). Budget implementation report: First quarter 2023. Abuja: Government of Nigeria.
7. BusinessDay. (2024, July 9). Debt servicing gulps 65% of Nigeria's revenue in 2023, hits N7.7trn. BusinessDay. <https://businessday.ng/news/article/debt-servicing-gulps-65-of-nigerias-revenue-in-2023-hits-n7-7trn/>
8. Central Bank of Nigeria [CBN]. (2024). Quarterly statistical bulletin: Debt service and government finance (Third Quarter 2024). Abuja: CBN.
9. Dawnay, N. (2013). The McMahon–Hussein Correspondence 1915–1916. Cambridge Middle Eastern Archive.
10. Du Bois, W. E. B. (1935). Black reconstruction in America, 1860–1880. Harcourt, Brace & Company.
11. Dunmoye, A. (2002). Ethnicity and citizenship in Nigeria: The trouble with population census. *Journal of African Studies*, 4(1), 1–15.
12. Eltis, D., & Richardson, D. (2010). Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Yale University Press.
13. Falola, T. (2009). A history of Nigeria. Cambridge University Press.
14. Falola, T., & Heaton, M. (2008). A history of Nigeria. Cambridge University Press.
15. Fanon, F. (1967). Black Skin, White Masks. Grove Press.
16. Foucault, M. (1977). Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Vintage Books. (Original work published 1975)
17. Fredrickson, G. M. (2002). Racism: A short history. Princeton University Press.
18. Fromkin, D. (1989). A peace to end all peace: The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the modern Middle East. Holt.
19. Gashaw, T. (2017). The making and legacy of the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 50(1), 123–145.
20. Goldenberg, D. M. (2003). The curse of Ham: Race and slavery in early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Princeton University Press.
21. Gould, S. J. (1981). The mismeasure of man. W. W. Norton & Company.
22. Harley, J. B. (1989). Deconstructing the map. *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, 26(2), 1–20.
23. International Monetary Fund. (2025). Nigeria: Staff report for the 2025 Article IV consultation. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.
24. International Organization for Migration. (2024). World Migration Report 2024. IOM.
25. Jennings, W. J. (2010). The Christian imagination: Theology and the origins of race. Yale University Press.
26. Johnson, D. H. (2016). South Sudan: A new history for a new nation. Ohio University Press.
27. Joseph, R. (1987). Democracy and prebendal politics in Nigeria. Cambridge University Press.
28. Ker-Lindsay, J. (2011). The Cyprus problem: What everyone needs to know. Oxford University Press.
29. Khalidi, R. (2006). The Iron Cage: The story of the Palestinian struggle for statehood. Beacon Press.
30. Kornbluh, P. (2003). The Pinochet file: A declassified dossier on atrocity and accountability. New York, NY: The New Press.
31. Krueger, A. O. (1998). Whither the World Bank and the IMF? *Journal of Economic Literature*, *36*(4), 1983–2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2565045>
32. Malik, J. (2021). India-China boundary issues and bilateral relations. Routledge.
33. Mamdani, M. (1996). Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism. Princeton University Press.
34. Maxwell, N. (2013). India's China war. Random House.
35. Mignolo, W. D. (1995). The darker side of the Renaissance: Literacy, territoriality, and colonization. University of Michigan Press.
36. Mishra, P. (2012). From the ruins of empire: The revolt against the West and the remaking of Asia. Alfred A. Knopf.

37. Mkandawire, T., & Soludo, C. C. (1999). *Our continent, our future: African perspectives on structural adjustment*. Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa.
38. Monaldi, F. (2005). The political economy of oil in Venezuela. In M. D. McCarthy (Ed.), *The political economy of natural resources in Latin America: Lessons from Venezuela* (pp. 91–123). University of Miami Press.
39. Monmonier, M. (1991). *How to lie with maps*. University of Chicago Press.
40. Muhr, T. (2016). *Counter-globalization and socialism in the 21st century: The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America*. Routledge.
41. Nairametrics. (2024, July 22). Debt service costs gulp 74% of FG's revenue in Q1 2024. Nairametrics. <https://nairametrics.com/2024/07/22/debt-service-costs-gulp-74-of-fgs-revenue-in-q1-2024/>
42. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2022). 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) survey. Abuja: NBS.
43. Nigerian Medical Association. (2023). Press statement on the Japa syndrome.
44. Nkrumah, K. (1965). *Neo-colonialism, the last stage of imperialism*. Thomas Nelson & Sons.
45. Nubukpo, K. (2019). *Sortir l'Afrique de la servitude monétaire: À qui profite le franc CFA? La Dispute*.
46. Nzongola-Ntalaja, G. (2002). *The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila—A people's history*. London: Zed Books.
47. Osaghae, E. E. (1998). *Crippled giant: Nigeria since independence*. Indiana University Press.
48. Roberts, J. T., & Parks, B. C. (2007). *A climate of injustice: Global inequality, North–South politics, and climate policy*. MIT Press.
49. Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Bogle-L'Ouverture.
50. Šavrič, B., Patterson, T., & Jenny, B. (2019). The Equal Earth map projection. *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*, 33(3), 1–14.
51. Stiglitz, J. E. (2002). *Globalization and its discontents*. W. W. Norton & Company.
52. Stuenkel, O. (2020). *Post-Western world: How emerging powers are remaking global order*. Polity Press.
53. Suberu, R. (2001). *Federalism and ethnic conflict in Nigeria*. United States Institute of Peace Press.
54. Sylla, N. S. (2017). *The CFA franc zone and monetary sovereignty in Africa*. Routledge.
55. Tamale, S. (2023). *Decolonization and sexuality in Africa*. Zed Books.
56. UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). (2022). *World investment report 2022: International tax reforms and sustainable investment*. Geneva: UNCTAD.
57. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2023). *Technology and innovation report 2023: Green technologies—Opportunities and challenges*. UNCTAD. <https://unctad.org/publication/technology-and-innovation-report-2023>.
58. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2025). *World investment report 2025*. UNCTAD. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/wir2025_en.pdf
59. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). (2019). *The African Monetary Fund: Opportunities and challenges*. Addis Ababa: UNECA Policy Brief Series.
60. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2020). *International migration 2020 (ST/ESA/SER.A/443)*. United Nations.
61. Vickers, A. (2013). *A history of modern Indonesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
62. wa Thiong'o, N. (1986). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. Heinemann.
63. Williams, E. (1944). *Capitalism and slavery*. University of North Carolina Press.
64. Winichakul, T. (1994). *Siam mapped: A history of the geo-body of a nation*. University of Hawaii Press.
65. Wood, D. (1992). *The power of maps*. The Guilford Press.
66. World Bank. (1990). *World development report 1990: Poverty*. Oxford University Press. <https://hdl.handle.net/10986/5973>
67. World Bank. (2023). *International debt report 2023*. World Bank Publications.
68. World Bank. (2025). *International debt report 2025*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/debt-statistics/idr>
69. World Bank. (2025). *Nigeria public finance review: Fiscal sustainability and inclusive growth*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.